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Dec 14 5/24
Aug. 1965, Date 2/15/21

SECRET SENSITIVE

March 15, 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Warning to Cubans and Soviets Against Interference with our Aerial Surveillance of Cuba

1. I recommend that the warning to the Cubans and Soviets against interfering with our overflights of Cuba, which you requested in your memorandum of March 6, 1964, be done in the form of a note to the Cuban Government to be delivered through the Czech Ambassador in Washington.

] There is enclosed for your consideration and approval the text of a proposed note.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

2. I also recommend that as a further deterrent we get word to Castro through "black" channels that: (a) we have taken very careful note of his recent public statements on overflights, (b) we interpret these statements as a threat to shoot down our surveillance flights, and (c) we would like nothing better, and we are prepared to react immediately to such an eventuality.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Discussion:

The late President Kennedy and I on various occasions following the missile crisis made public statements indicating that in the absence of inspection on the ground we would maintain our surveillance flights over Cuba and that any interference with those flights would invite a dangerous situation. A compilation of these statements is enclosed.

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Last June the Cubans sent us a note protesting U.S. overflights and warning that: (1) Cuban gunners had orders to fire at any foreign war plane that makes low-altitude flights over Cuban territory, and (2) the Cuban Government was stepping up its preparations to shoot down any war plane that violated Cuban air space at any altitude. In our reply, sent to the Cubans through the Czechs, we reminded the Cuban Government of our publicly expressed position on the dangers of any interference with air surveillance and pointed out that our position remained unchanged.

The text of our reply is enclosed.

In recent months Fidel Castro has repeatedly alluded to violation of Cuban air space by U.S. aircraft. The most forthright of his statements was made in a press conference with foreign newsmen on February 6, 1964. Castro said: "The Government of Cuba has repeatedly warned the United States of the consequences which may result from violations of our air space. It must not be forgotten that this is an arbitrary action which may create problems and incidents."

The foregoing statement, made in the context of the fishing boat incident, gives us a good occasion for sending a warning to the Cubans on the overflights. Since in the next few days we plan to send a routine reply to the Cubans, via the Czech Ambassador, on their notes concerning various aspects of the fishing boat incident and Guantanamo, we would use the same occasion to deliver the warning note.

This will avoid our having to make a special, direct approach to the Soviets on this matter, which could be counterproductive in that the Soviets would feel compelled to respond and thus commit themselves more formally in ways they may otherwise desire to avoid.

Dean Rusk

Dean Rusk

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Enclosures:

Proposed Note of Warning to Cubans on Overflights
Note Sent to Cuba, Via the Czechs, on Surveillance
Flights (September 2, 1963)
Statements on Air Surveillance Over Cuba

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PROPOSED NOTE OF WARNING TO CUBANS ON OVERFLIGHTS

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to His Excellency the Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in charge of diplomatic and consular representation for Cuba in the United States and requests that he convey the following note to the Government of Cuba:

The Government of the United States has noted that Prime Minister Fidel Castro in his press conference of February 6, in which he spoke at length concerning the detention of the Cuban fishing boats, made repeated references to United States aircraft overflying Cuba. The Government of the United States wishes to take this occasion to call again to the attention of the Cuban Government the contents of the note relating to aerial surveillance which was delivered through the Embassy of Czechoslovakia in Washington on September 2, 1963. In the present circumstances the Government of the United States desires to reaffirm its publicly expressed position on this question, pointing out once again that it remains unchanged.

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Authority DATE 12/5/77
By mmg NARS, Date 7/5/77

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NOTE SENT TO CUBA, VIA THE CZECHS, ON SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to the Charge d'Affaires ad interim of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in charge of diplomatic and consular representation for Cuba in the United States and requests him to inform the Government of Cuba that the Government of the United States has taken note of the statements contained in the note of the Government of Cuba of June 24, 1963, that Cuban gunners have orders to fire at any foreign war plane that makes low altitude flights over Cuban territory; and that the Government of Cuba is stepping up its defense preparations in order to be ready to intercept and shoot down any war plane that violates Cuban air space at any altitude.

The Government of the United States wishes again to call the attention of the Government of Cuba to the well-known, publicly expressed position of the Government of the United States on this question. The position of the Government of the United States on this matter has not changed.

Department of State,

Washington, September 2, 1963.

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Authority

By MMG; NARS, Date 11-2-80

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The Government of the United States wishes again to call the [illegible] of the Government of Cuba to the well-known publicly expressed position of the Government of the United States on this question. The position of the Government of the United States on this matter has not changed.

Department of State

Washington, September 2, 1963.